



Leave Me Alone!

How to Slow the Flow of Unwanted Communications

CONSUMER INFORMATION SHEET 5

Many people today feel overwhelmed by the volume of sales offers they receive at home. You may not be able to completely stop the flow of telephone, fax, mail, or email solicitations, but you can reduce it. You can avoid getting on some marketing lists in the first place. And you can take steps to get off many of the lists you are already on.

Staying Off Marketing Lists

- ❑ Do not fill out consumer surveys or marketing surveys.
- ❑ Do not fill out surveys attached to product “warranty registration cards.” You do not have to complete and return the cards to enjoy your warranty rights.¹
- ❑ Do not fill out sweepstakes entry forms.
- ❑ When you give money to a charity or other group, enclose a note asking them not to share, sell or rent your name to any other organization. Do the same when you order from a catalog.
- ❑ Exercise your opt-out rights wherever you can. Your financial institutions are required to notify you of your right to stop them from sharing your personal financial information with outside companies.² Read the privacy policies of Web sites. They often give you an opportunity to opt out of receiving email ads or of having your information shared with other companies.

Telemarketing Calls

- ❑ Sign up for the national Do Not Call Registry. Most telemarketers should not call your number once it has been on the registry for three months. If one does, you can file a complaint at the Do Not Call Website. You can register your home or mobile phone for free. Your registration will be effective for five years. Register by phone at 1-888-382-1222. Or register online at www.donotcall.gov.
- ❑ Political and charitable organizations may still call you even if you’ve signed up for the Do Not Call Registry. If you tell them not to call you again, they are required to honor your request. If not, you can complain to the FTC at the Web site above.
- ❑ Get an unlisted phone number. Unlisted numbers usually get fewer unwanted calls. Or call your telephone company’s business office and ask to have your name removed from its street address directories. Companies typically charge a monthly fee for these services.
- ❑ Watch out for do-not-call scams. They may try to steal personal information by posing as a State do-not-call program.



Telemarketing (continued)

- ❑ For more information on reducing telemarketing calls, see Privacy Rights Clearinghouse Fact Sheet 5 at www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs5-tmkt.htm, EPIC's information at www.epic.org/privacy/telemarketing, and Junkbusters' tips and sample letters at www.junkbusters.com/telemarketing.html.

Junk Mail

- ❑ Sign up for the Direct Marketing Association's Mail Preference Service. In three to four months, you should receive less junk mail. This is a voluntary industry program. It will not stop all junk mail. The service costs \$5 online at www.dmaconsumers.org/cgi/offmailinglist.dave. It is available for free by writing to Mail Preference Service, Attn. Dept. 8354169, Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 282, Carmel, NY 10512. It's good for five years.
- ❑ Call 888-5OPTOUT to stop most unsolicited pre-approved credit offers. This is good for two years. To make it permanent, write to Opt-Out Department, P.O. Box 24025, Seattle, WA 98124-0025. Send your full name, current home address, previous home address and Social Security number. Sign and date your letter.
- ❑ For more information on stopping junk mail, see Privacy Rights Clearinghouse Fact Sheet 4 at www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs4-junk.htm, Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility's tips at

www.cpsr.org/cpsr/privacy/junkmail.html, or Junkbusters' tips at www.junkbusters.com/junkmail.html.

Junk Faxes

- ❑ Federal law bans the sending of commercial faxes without first getting the consent of the receiver. All such faxes must include time and date sent, and the phone number of the sending fax machine.³
- ❑ For more information on stopping junk faxes, see Junkbusters' tips and sample letters at www.junkbusters.com/fax.html.

Spam or Junk Email

- ❑ Never respond to spam. Never buy anything advertised in spam. Protect your email address like other personal information. Do not post your email address on your Web site. Use a separate email address for newsgroups.
- ❑ Register with the Direct Marketing Association's e-Mail Preference Service at www.dmaconsumers.org/offemaillist.html. It's free and it's good for two years. This is a voluntary industry program that will not stop all junk email.
- ❑ Report spam to your Internet service provider (ISP). California law allows ISPs to sue those who send spam from its network or to its subscribers in violation of its policy.⁴
- ❑ Report spam to the California Attorney General's Office. For more information, see <http://caag.state.ca.us/spam/index.htm>.
- ❑ For more tips on controlling spam, see Privacy Rights Clearinghouse Fact Sheet 20 (Anti-Spam Resources) at



Spam (continued)

www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs20-spam.htm,
Computer Professionals for Social
Responsibility's spam page at
www.cpsr.org/program/privacy/spam.html, or
Junkbusters' tips, including how to track
down spammers and sample letters, at
www.junkbusters.com/junkemail.html.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes and should not be construed as legal advice or as policy of the State of California. If you want advice in a particular case, you should consult an attorney or other expert. The fact sheet may be copied, if (1) the meaning of the copied text is not changed or misrepresented, (2) credit is given to the Office of Privacy Protection in the California Department of Consumer Affairs, and (3) all copies are distributed free of charge.

NOTES

¹California Civil Code Section 1793.1(a)(1) requires a warranty or product registration card to contain a statement that failure to complete and return the card does not diminish a consumer's warranty rights. For text of the law, go to www.privacy.ca.gov/code/cc1793.1.htm.

² For more information, see the Financial Privacy page on the Office of Privacy Protection web site at <http://www.privacy.ca.gov/financial/financial.htm>.

³ The federal Telephone Consumer Protection Act, 47 U.S.C. § 227, is available at www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/47/227.html.

⁴ California Business and Professions Code Section 17538.45 gives an email service provider the right to sue those who send unsolicited commercial email from its network in California or to its subscribers in violation of the provider's policy. Penal Code Section 502(c)(9) adds the unauthorized, damaging use of domain names ("email spoofing") to the Computer Crimes Act, with criminal penalties and private right of action. Additionally Business and Professions Code sections 17529 and following generally bans spam without the prior permission of the recipient. This California law may be wholly or partially preempted by the federal CANSPAM Act. For the text of the state and federal spam laws, go to the Privacy Laws page on the Office of Privacy Protection Web site at <http://www.privacy.ca.gov/lawenforcement/laws.htm>